

Washington, DC –Friday, Congressman Harry Teague unveiled new legislation aimed at improving employment opportunities for veterans. The Energy Jobs for Veterans Act seeks to establish programs to provide on-the-job training, apprenticeship, real experience, and long-term employment in the energy fields to veterans.

Funded by competitive grants, the program would provide an energy employer up to 50%, or up to \$20,000, of a veteran's salary for a year of apprenticeship and on-the-job training. The program would be available to employers across multiple energy fields, including energy efficient building, construction and retrofits, renewable electric power, biofuel production, energy efficiency assessment, oil and gas, and nuclear power.

"These men and women stood up and fought to protect the freedoms and opportunities that we take for granted today. Yet when our veterans return to civilian life, they are finding it increasingly difficult to find jobs," said Congressman Harry Teague, a member of the U.S. House Committee on Veteran's Affairs. "The bill I've introduced addresses two important issues facing our country – helping our veterans find meaningful, stable employment following their service, while growing New Mexico's energy industries and securing America's energy independence."

The latest survey of veterans unemployment by the Department of Labor shows the number of unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is now almost the same as the number of service members currently deployed in support of those two wars. When the national unemployment rate hit 9.7% last fall, veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were unemployed at a rate of 11.3%.

“Under my bill, those who fought for us abroad would be able to continue their work for the security of our country when they return home – by getting a job producing our energy right here in New Mexico,” said Congressman Teague.

The legislation comes after a roundtable discussion Congressman Harry Teague held in Valencia County focused on expanding job opportunities for Veterans. Local veterans, representatives from New Mexico Economic Development, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the New Mexico Department of Veterans Affairs, the University of New Mexico – Valencia and Workforce Connection of Central New Mexico attended to discuss different ways to make energy job opportunities more accessible to veterans.

Congressman Teague has continually made veterans’ issues a top priority, helping to secure advanced appropriations for the VA and introducing legislation aimed at addressing and reducing the impact PTSD and mental health issues have on the lives of returning veterans. He recently lead a bi-partisan group in forming the Invisible Wounds Caucus, to promote awareness of and solutions for the mental health challenges facing our service members and veterans.

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